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The species of *Cercococcyx* in Mwinilunga, Northern Rhodesia

by C. W. BENSON

Received 13th August, 1963

Benson (1958) records four specimens of *Cercococcyx mechowi* Cabanis from the Lisombo Stream, northern Mwinilunga District. At the time of collecting he thought that they must be *C. olivinus* Sassi, which has been collected as close as Katapena, in the Katanga (Chapin, 1939). But having no other material of either species available he donated one specimen to the British Museum, and was informed that it was *mechowi*.

The remarkably long wing-lengths (148-157 mm.) of these specimens, and of another (155 mm.) collected at Salujinga (10° 58' S., 24° 07' E.) on 25th August, 1962, recently caused me to investigate the matter further. Thanks to Mrs. B. P. Hall and Mr. M. P. Stuart Irwin I have had the loan of eight specimens of *mechowi* and seven of *olivinus* from the British Museum, and of four Mwinilunga specimens together with one of *C. montanus* Chapin from the National Museum, Bulawayo.

There is no doubt that all five Mwinilunga specimens are not *mechowi*, but *olivinus*. Chapin (1928: 2) mentions colour-differences between the two species on the under side which seem better marked and more constant than those which he gives for the upper side. In the key at the end of his paper, and again (1939), he only gives the latter. The blackish bars on the under side are fewer and narrower in *olivinus*, and the under tail-coverts lack the markedly buffy wash present in *mechowi*.

The difference in the proportions of the wing and tail, given by Chapin (1928, 1939) is borne out quite well by my own measurements. To these I am able to add those of the material in the American Museum of Natural History, taken while working there in June, 1962, thanks to a grant from the Frank M. Chapman Memorial Fund, very kindly arranged by Dr. D. Amadon.

It would be tedious to show these measurements (in mm.) for each specimen individually, but the following summary (averages in brackets) may be of value:—

	<i>Cercococcyx mechowi</i>		
	Wing	Tail	100 x wing tail
17♂♂	128–143 (136.9)	168–194 (180.5)	75.3
6♀♀	132–140 (135.8)	170–195 (181.2)	74.9
1o	135	181	74.6

Wing-tail ratios for 19 individual specimens:— 73 (three), 74 (five), 75, 76 (two), 77, 78 (two), 79 (two), 80 (three).

	<i>Cercococcyx olivinus</i>		
18♂♂	137–155 (146.1)	149–189 (169.6)	86.1
3♀♀	142–148 (145.0)	153–173 (163.0)	89.0
1o	139	156	89.8

Wing-tail ratios for 21 individual specimens:— 78 (two), 80, 81 (two), 82, 83, 84, 85, 88, 89, 90 (three), 91 (three), 92, 93 (two), 95.

[Note that southern specimens of *olivinus* tend to have longer wings, eight from Mwinilunga and Ndalla Tando and Camabatela, Angola measuring 145–155 (150.4), 14 from Lukolela (1° 07' S.) and from north of the equator 137–150 (142.9)].

The ranges of *montanus* and *olivinus* approach one another closely in the eastern Congo and Uganda. In Uganda *montanus* is known from Ruwenzori above 5,000 feet, and there is a male of *olivinus* in the American Museum of Natural History, with wing 150, tail 166 mm., from the Bugoma Forest, between Hoima and the east side of Lake Albert.

There remains for discussion the relationship of *montanus* to *olivinus* and *mechowi*. According to Chapin (1928) the voices of the latter two are quite distinct. His description of the call of *montanus* tallies quite well with my own impressions gained at Amani, Tanganyika and in Nyasaland (Benson, 1948). Benson (1958) remarks on the close similarity of the voice of Mwinilunga birds to *montanus*, and goes so far as to suggest that *mechowi* and *montanus* are conspecific (of course he really intended this to apply to *olivinus* and *montanus*). It is rather surprising that Chapin does not comment on any similarity between the voice of *olivinus* and *montanus*, especially as his description of that of *olivinus* seems applicable to Mwinilunga birds.

Chapin (1928 : 9) gives the wing-tail ratio in eastern Congo and Ruwenzori specimens of *montanus* as 69–76%, and in two from Angoniland and the Uluguru Mts. as 79, 81%. The figures given by Benson & Benson (1948) result in a ratio of 80.3%. These ratios lend no strong support for closer relationship with either *olivinus* or *mechowi*, but in view of their close similarity in voice *olivinus* and *montanus* can at least be regarded as forming a superspecies. Where their ranges approach one another there is evidently altitudinal zonation.

I am grateful to Mr. C. M. N. White for studying with me the material recently loaned. He agrees with my decision to regard *olivinus* and *montanus* as forming a superspecies.

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Comments on colour varieties in the Golden Plover

by BRYAN L. SAGE

Received 21st October, 1963

In the course of studies on albinism and melanism in birds I have collected records relating to five species in the family Charadriidae. A total of 24 of these records refer to the Golden Plover *Charadrius apricarius* Linnaeus and these fall into the following categories—melanism 1, unclassified 1, albinism 22.

MELANISM

The single record in this category is of an almost entirely black bird with some yellowish mottling on the back, seen in the vicinity of St. Columb, Cornwall, on 24th January, 1933 (C. J. Stevens *in litt.*).

UNCLASSIFIED

A bird in which the general body plumage was a pale lemon-yellow with the normal dark markings reduced to a very pale brown; bill and legs normal in colour, was seen near Tarsset, Northumberland, on 23rd November, 1957 (G. W. Temperley *in litt.*). The description suggests that this may have been an example of dilution, but it is impossible to say definitely that the reduction of the pigments had been uniform throughout. The other alternative is that the bird was a non-eumelanic schizochroic variety in which the great reduction of the black pigment resulted in an impression of overall paleness.

ALBINISM

The 22 records in this category can be divided into two groups, *viz.*:

(1) Albinism affecting the body plumage only, or the body and wings. There are only six records in this group and in view of the apparent infrequency of this form of albinism in the Golden Plover it seems worth while listing these.

(a) A specimen obtained near Forest Gate, Essex, in April 1871 by Mr. J. Glessing had all the feathers cream and white (Glegg 1929).

(b) A partially white example purchased in Leadenhall Market was exhibited to the British Ornithologists' Club on 10th December, 1913. It had numerous white feathers in the plumage, and all the markings on the back and wings were white instead of golden (*Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 33: 87).

(c) A buff-coloured bird with white wings was seen near St. Keverne, Cornwall, in December 1932 (C. J. Stevens *in litt.*).

(d) An albino was present at Skegness, Lincolnshire, on 12th November, 1955, and was reported by J. K. Burton (R. Cornwallis *in litt.*).